

Dear friends,

And so we begin the new Church year with the first Sunday in Advent. We shall be looking at the Old Testament and the Book of Isaiah. Here he describes a vision of the mountain of the Lord, to which the peoples of the world flock to find wisdom and guidance. It is a picture of a world of peace, where nations will no longer engage in war and God will bring justice. God's people are to walk in the light of the Lord. What a wonderful vision which we pray will come about. With every blessing to you all, Margaret.

---

---

**Call to worship:**

Come to the mountain of the Lord to receive God's teaching and to walk his paths.

Come to seek his justice and peace, as we await his coming amongst us.

Lord, as we are here today as your holy people, help us do right by one another and love one another. May we push away from our hearts and minds all that is not peaceful, all that is unfair and unloving. Amen.

Almighty God, in the midst of the busyness of Advent and Christmas, may we never forget the wonder of your being.

May we never neglect the love you give us and show us – may we never forget that glimpse of you, that surprise of who and what you are that first brought us to worship and adore you. Amen.

**The words to 'Sing we the King' written by Charles Silvester Horne [1865-1914]****StF 185**

1 Sing we the King who is coming to reign; glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!

Life and salvation his empire shall bring, joy to the nations when Jesus is King.

*Refrain: Come let us sing: praise to our King – Jesus our King, Jesus our King:*

*This is our song who to Jesus belong: glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King!*

2 All shall be well in his kingdom of peace; freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;

Justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring; wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King: *Refrain.....*

3 Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin; doubt shall not darken his witness within;

hell has no terrors, and death has no sting; love is victorious when Jesus is king: *Refrain.....*

4 Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray; hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day

when this new song your creation shall sing; Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King: *Refrain.....*

**Prayer and Lord's Prayer:**

We sometimes want to rush to Christmas, not taking time to value the journey of Advent.

Forgive us, God.

We sometimes forget to prepare as we ought – to reflect and to seek – and to offer help and support to those who need it.

Forgive us, God.

We sometimes get wrapped up in things that we want, but they aren't always right or fair.

Forgive us, God.

We sometimes get wrapped up like a gift, with tape so tight and secure that we can't see the needs of the world.

Forgive us, God. Amen.

Our God of Justice, love and peace, hears our confession – forgives our sins – and walks with us in this Advent time. Thanks be to God. Amen.

God of the journey, thank you for walking with us. Thank you for:  
visions and dreams that reveal more of your purposes,  
hope in the future, expectation and exploration,  
the guidance you have given and the hand that leads us,  
the chance to turn round and make good what is bad,  
to make right what is wrong, to make light out of darkness,  
to make peace out of war, to make hope out of despair,  
to make meaning and purpose where none has been found.  
God of the journey, thanks be to you. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

.....

We may think we are always right, and the opposing side is always wrong. When we judge, it is rarely positive. But there is a better, more tolerant, kinder way to live with one another. On the first Sunday in Advent we explore how to be less judgemental and how to fight for justice and peace as we await Jesus, the one who will put the world to rights. First, though, we read the passage from Isaiah.

**Isaiah 2: 1-5 taken from The Holy Bible: Easy to Read version. Copyright 2006 by World Bible Translation Center, Inc – and used by permission**

Isaiah, son of Amoz saw this message about Judah and Jerusalem.

“In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be the highest of all mountains.

It will be raised higher than the hills.

There will be a steady stream of people from all nations going there.

People from many places will go there and say: ‘Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob.’

Then God will teach us his way of living and we will follow him.”

His teaching, the Lord's message, will begin in Jerusalem on Mount Zion and will go out to all the world.

Then God will act as a judge to end arguments against nations. He will decide what is right for people from many lands.

They will stop using their weapons for war, they will hammer their swords into plows [*sic*] and use their spears to make tools for harvesting.

All fighting between nations will end. They will never again train for war.

Family of Jacob, let us follow the Lord.

**Comment:** During Advent we often follow the Book of Isaiah as we look for Jesus to come among us. Isaiah is so important in how Christians have come to understand Jesus that it has sometimes been called a 'fifth gospel'. Scholars believe that it was actually written over many years by at least three 'Isaiahs' and their writings have been conflated. The first lived before the great disaster and warned people it was coming but that they could still avoid it. The second was with the exiles living through the great disaster and he taught them how to hold on and hope in dark times. The third spoke to those returning about how they should learn from all that they had endured and 'build back better'. In this passage, the first Isaiah describes what the people should have been building towards. He goes on to say how they have been distracted and fallen short of this vision. The Temple is meant to have earned high esteem, making Jerusalem seem the most important, most impressive, highest city. All nations are meant to be learning peace from it. God's Word will teach them a way of life that means they do not have to live in constant conflict with one another. They can recycle their weapons into farm implements and forget about training for war. The last sentence is a plea to his people to be like that – to work for that vision – to 'walk in the light of the Lord'. We have not arrived yet!

**Matthew 24: 36-44 [see above for Bible details]**

No-one knows when that day or time will be. The Son and the angels in heaven don't know when it will be. Only the Father knows.

When the Son of Man comes, it will be the same as what happened during Noah's time. In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving their children to be married, right up to the day Noah entered the boat. They knew nothing about what was happening until the flood came and destroyed them all.

It will be the same when the Son of Man comes. Two men were in the field. One will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding grain with a mill. One will be taken and the other left. So always be ready. You don't know the day your Lord will come. Obviously, a homeowner who knew what time a thief was planning to come would be ready and not let the thief break in. So you also must be ready. The Son of Man will come at a time when you don't expect him.

**Comment:**

This might be a frightening piece of Scripture for some of us. We may have been taught to fear the Day of the Lord because of our own personal sinfulness and now Jesus tells us that we can never know when that day will come. Even he does not know. So, we should live as if we are ready for that day. Perhaps, however, we have learnt to fear because we automatically think about what it will mean for us personally rather than for the world as a whole. The Day of the Lord is when God steps in to put things right. The exploitation of the weak by the powerful will end. Pain and sorrow and suffering will be wiped away – 'the last enemy to be destroyed is death' [1 Corinthians 15: 26]. Knowing that, perhaps a better reaction to the coming Day is hope rather than fear. All we have done for love, justice and peace will be justified, all causes of sin and sorrow swept away. Who would not long for a day like that? How do we 'keep awake' in expectation of a time like that?

**Prayer;**

A prayer of thanksgiving:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

Father, you desire that the whole creation should unite to praise, honour and glorify you for ever.

*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Thank you for revealing your perfect purposes for our wholeness and salvation.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

Thank you for the air that we breathe, and the food we enjoy – for the beauty and wonder of the world, the bare outlines of the trees etched against the skyline – the dazzling holly berries in the winter gloom – lights in streets, shops and houses and the warmth of home on a chilly night.

Thank you for loving family, friends and pets.

Thank you for this Advent season, when we can prepare again for the coming of Christ.

*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.*

*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*

Thank you for pricking our consciences, giving us time to amend our lives and put things right with you and with each other.

Make us strong and keep our heads above water when the tidal water of consumerism, greed and excess sweeps our nation.

Help us to plant our feet firmly on the rock, our sights fixed on the straight and narrow way of the Lord, and watching for the daybreak.

*For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.*

Prayer written by Louise Armitage 2004 [in Roots Worship 2004]

### **Close:**

With thankfulness, radiant God, we offer you the week that lies ahead.

We ask you to make our lives so empty of self-concern, so transparent, that the glory of your light may shine through us with warmth and hope and joy and beauty and tenderness and energy and life.

Amen.

The journey has begun -

the first candle has been lit.

Let light and hope go with you –

be light and hope for a waiting world. Amen.

*Unless otherwise designated Copyright Roots For Churches Limited [www.rootsforchurches.com]*

*Reproduced with permission.*